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DSSD CENSUS 2000 PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM SERIES #N-3

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MEMORANDUM FOR

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Attention:

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From:

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Subject:

Census 2000 Update/Leave Trip Report

On Thursday, March 23 and Friday, March 24 I observed the update/leave operation for the Census 2000 in rural Arkansas. I observed different interviewers each day.

First Day

On the first day of observation I was outside the town of Monticello. The roads were mostly dirt roads. The addresses had recently been given street names, though they were not always obvious. The housing units recently had rural route and box number mailing addresses. The housing units ranged from trailers in poor condition to attractive single family homes. Unleashed dogs were a hazard. Several times we had to run back into the car to avoid them and in some cases we never ventured out of the car.

In the morning I was with two enumerators. Since the update/leave work in the local census office (LCO) was winding down, the crew leader assigned two enumerators to the assignment area in expectation that they could finish up operations more quickly. These two enumerators generally followed procedures, interviewed effectively and showed good judgement in determining units to be added or deleted. Specific observations include:

- The enumerators conducted the interviews well. They introduced themselves, showed their badges, handed out privacy notices, inquired about the correct address and about additional living quarters. Where appropriate they asked about additional structures they may have seen, like a shed, and attempted proxy interviews. They handled themselves in a professional and courteous manner. Sometimes both interviewers approached the

respondent, sometimes only one did.

- The enumerators kept alert for units to be added, duplicates and units to be deleted because they were uninhabitable. They found some of these cases. A missed trailer was added, and a house with broken windows was deemed uninhabitable. They also detected a duplicate listing.
- The enumerators updated their address books correctly. For added units they also filled out the questionnaire correctly.
- The enumerators updated the maps correctly.
- Despite the enumerators being alert for units to add there were lapses in their detection. They failed to inquire about possible living quarters at a grocery store in the block. They failed to add a unit in a case where there was a prefabricated home which had two front doors and two meters but which was listed as one unit. They failed to interview at a lakeside cottage at the end of a lonely looking dirt road, probably because they did not notice the cottage through the woods.
- The enumerators were quick to designate a housing unit as uninhabitable. For example, they deleted a beat up looking wooden house that most people would not want to live in. However, the house had intact doors and roof, unbroken windows, a mailbox and an electric meter.
- The enumerators concluded that two deer camps were uninhabitable, reasoning they were not intended for regular habitation. However, these structures were perfectly livable. In another case the enumerator declined to drive down a long dirt road because the listing in the book indicated only a deer camp. She just coded the listing uninhabitable.
- Some respondents insisted they had obtained a questionnaire in the mail and had already sent it back. The enumerator asked the respondent to take the questionnaire and indicated she would call them back with more instruction after consulting her crew leader.
- One respondent did not wait for the update/leave operation to deliver her census form; she went to the town hall and obtained a census form, presumably a "Be Counted" form. This respondent refused to accept a questionnaire. The enumerator returned this questionnaire to the crew leader.

Second Day

On the second day I was in the small town of Dumas. The addresses in the assignment area we canvassed all had street names and house numbers. The first block consisted of low income housing. The units in the second block were single unit structures. The enumerator who conducted the interviews was accompanied by a second enumerator described as a trainee, who observed. It was not clear to me why an enumerator was being trained at this advanced stage of the operation. This enumerator who conducted the interviews did not consistently follow the update/leave procedures. Specific observations include:

- The enumerator did not conduct the interviews properly. She did not introduce herself nor show her badge. She did not consistently hand out the privacy act notice. She did not inquire for alternate addresses (perhaps she felt that this was obvious as the units all had street names and house numbers.) When the name of the householder was available the enumerator would ask the respondent if he or she was the person listed, instead of asking

for the name of an adult member of the household. Furthermore she did not inquire about additional living quarters.

- The enumerator updated the address book correctly.
- The enumerator never looked at the block maps with the map spots, and thus never considered updating the maps for poorly located map spots.
- The units in one block were not listed in the order they appeared on the ground. The enumerator, however, worked from the book to the ground. Note that in these blocks I noticed no units that should have been added.
- The enumerator did detect a duplicate and processed it appropriately.

Conclusions

- The update/leave operation is well conceived and the enumerators' manual is excellent. The enumerators obtained the appropriate information when following procedures.
- There was clearly variation in the competency of the enumerators.
- The enumerators performed without error the most mechanical, detailed parts of their tasks, such as filling out the books. They were more likely to fail at tasks requiring judgement, good interviewing skills, or a keen eye of observation.
- The update/leave operation will likely accomplish its goals of deleting non-existent or uninhabitable housing units, delivering questionnaires, updating addresses, and finding duplicates. It will, however, fail to detect some housing units that should be added.

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